

Undermining human security: private security companies, the APPF, Militias and Auxiliary Police in Afghanistan

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Undermining Human Security

Private Security Companies, the APPF, Militias and Auxiliary Police in Afghanistan

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Summary

In the fight against insurgents, terrorists, and criminals, the United States (US) has worked with numerous armed groups in Afghanistan. We call these actors 'force multipliers' as they are employed in order to increase the capabilities of national and international forces by supporting them in security functions. In Afghanistan, force multipliers comprise four types of actors: Private Security Companies (PSCs), the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF), militias, and auxiliary police forces. This report argues that force multipliers are a problem for the physical and economic security of the local population in Afghanistan which urgently needs to be addressed.

As key causes of the negative impact of international force multipliers on human security, our analysis identifies weaknesses in the areas of recruitment, vetting, command and control, and prosecution of these forces. Such weaknesses have allowed armed groups to pursue their own parochial interests; these include the involvement in competition among various clans and power brokers, the exploitation of the local population, and the expansion of their own influence.

Both the US and the international community share responsibility for this development. This report illustrates how the US, in particular, has funded, trained, equipped and made use of force multipliers in Afghanistan for a variety of reasons. PSCs were first brought to Afghanistan in the wake of the intervention in order to relieve US military forces of security support functions. Over the years, their number and role have expanded exponentially. While many PSCs have operated according to the law, major national and international companies have been implicated in human rights violations. In response, as of 2010, the Afghan government has sought to replace all armed PSCs with a government-owned private security provider, the APPF. However, due to problems with developing the APPF, many international actors continue to rely on PSCs. With the March 2014 decision by the Afghan government to disband the APPF, the renewed proliferation of PSCs seems possible which could have significant consequences for human security.

Furthermore, the US has also collaborated with Afghan militias and supported the development of auxiliary police forces to relieve national and international military forces of security responsibilities. In some districts, these pro-government armed groups have contributed to stability, while, in others, the opposite has been the case: militias and auxiliary police have threatened, tortured and murdered local citizens and stolen their property.

Through an investigation of these actors, the present report aims to address an existing imbalance in the analysis of the international intervention in Afghanistan. This relates to force multipliers being understood primarily as expedient means for achieving strategic security objectives. By placing their impact on human security at center stage, this report seeks to illustrate the dangers to the local population implicit in using force multipliers.

In conclusion, this report recommends that rather than pursuing quick-fix strategies through a multiplicity of non-state armed groups, the US and its allies should focus their resources on helping create effective and accountable national armed and police forces in

Afghanistan. The funds, training and equipment that have been invested into force multipliers could have made a major contribution to achieving this goal. Instead, they have fostered the development of a security environment in which a myriad of armed groups vie for power and influence.

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1. Introduction

The year 2014 marked the end of large-scale international combat operations in Afghanistan.¹ Debates are rife over whether and how security can be established in post-2014 Afghanistan. The discussions about suitable strategies for international security assistance to Afghan armed forces have been limited in two ways: First, they have revolved primarily around the main Afghan National Security Forces; second, they have focused on the stability of the Afghan state.

This report aims to address these limitations by examining the role and impact of other pro-government armed groups which have been supported and utilized by the international community in an attempt to provide stability. Specifically, the report investigates how these armed groups have impacted on human security in Afghanistan, i.e. the physical and economic security of the civilian population.

The following study shows how the United States (US), in particular, has developed, funded, trained, equipped and utilized a range of armed actors in Afghanistan, which have gone on to become independent forces. We call these actors ‘force multipliers’ as they are employed in order to increase the capabilities of national and international forces by supporting them in security functions.² In Afghanistan, these force multipliers comprise four types of actors, which are often interlinked through personal connections and subcontracting: Private Security Companies (PSCs),³ the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF), militias, and auxiliary police forces.

In analyzing the impacts of these actors from a human security perspective, this report follows a shift in security paradigms from a state-centered understanding of security to one that places the security of individuals at center stage. While state-centered analyses of the international security strategy in Afghanistan focus largely on military issues – namely successes in the fight against the Taliban –, these studies often ignore the fact that the ultimate objective of security policies is to protect human life and the well-being of the Afghan population. However, whether this objective is achieved or undermined through the use of force multipliers is a question that is outside the scope of a state-centered definition of security.

1 We are grateful to the interviewees for speaking to us (many on the condition of anonymity), as well as to Oldrich Bures, Carolin Liss, Thomas Müller and Simone Wisotzki for their comments. Elke Krahmann would like to acknowledge Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funding for this research as part of her project ‘Markets in the Making of Multilateral Military Interventions: International Organizations and Private Military and Security Companies’, grant number ES/J021091/1,

2 This definition builds on the US Department of Defense’s understanding of force multipliers as ‘a capability that, when added to and employed by a combat force, significantly increases the combat potential of that force and thus enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment’, at: www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/data/f/8037.html (23.2.2015).

3 This Report uses the US government’s definition of PSCs as companies that provide “personal security, convoy security, and static security missions” (CENTCOM 2014).

Although there is discord among ‘broad’ definitions of human security – which can include everything from safety to health and underdevelopment – and ‘narrow’ definitions – which pertain only to violent threats –, academic and policy-making circles now accept widely that security includes more than the mere survival of the state (Owen 2004; Martin/Owen 2014). This report adopts a middle road by defining human security as “the human consequences of armed conflict and the dangers posed to civilians by repressive governments and situations of state failure” (Newman 2010: 80). Within this context, the study focuses on victimization by “identifiable human agents” (Owen 2014: 376). However, it shows that human insecurity is not only caused by direct violence, but also by conflict-related crime and economic exploitation.

This report argues that the conditions and prospects for human security in Afghanistan are poor and that the proliferation of armed force multipliers is one reason for this. An important indicator of human insecurity is an increase in civilian casualties. In Afghanistan, civilian casualty figures have been on the rise for several years now: between January and June of 2014, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA 2014: 1) reported that 4,853 persons had been killed or wounded as a result of the armed conflict. This is a 24-percent increase in civilian casualties compared to the first six months of 2013.

The following analysis shows that the actions of PSCs, the APPF, militias and auxiliary forces have been major contributing factors to undermining human security in Afghanistan. An assessment of these four actors in comparison to Afghan governmental forces is not possible due to the limitation of the official data regarding the human security impact of pro-government armed groups to the auxiliary police forces (e.g. UNAMA 2014). Instead, this report aims to illustrate the scope and the character of human insecurity resulting from the use of force multipliers. In order to go about this, the report draws on four types of sources: academic and policy publications, official documents from international organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and media reports. In addition, the report includes information from personal observations in Afghanistan and interviews with representatives from international organizations, governments, security forces, NGOs and ordinary citizens. This information was collected over the course of five trips between 2009 and 2013 to various parts of Afghanistan (with a focus on Kabul and northern Afghanistan, but also including trips to the south and east).

The report is structured into four sections. Section 1 examines the reasons for the establishment and the development of the main force multipliers in Afghanistan: PSCs, the APPF, militias and auxiliary police forces. Section 2 analyzes key pathologies associated with the use of these actors in support of the international security strategy within the country. Section 3 illustrates how these pathologies have contributed to undermining the human security of the local population in Afghanistan. Section 4 concludes with the recommendations that more must be done to control pro-government armed groups in Afghanistan and that international actors should refrain from using force multipliers in future interventions on account of the fact that they jeopardize long-term human security.

2. Causes of the Force Multiplier Problem

The motivational and structural causes associated with the emergence of force multipliers as independent security forces and the problems they pose for human security in Afghanistan are manifold. This section first discusses why the US, in particular, has supported and used force multipliers as part of the international security strategy within the country. This is followed by an investigation of the structural conditions and developments contributing to major pathologies with regard to the relations and operations of PSCs, the APPF, militias and auxiliary police forces.

The US has promoted the use of force multipliers in Afghanistan for a variety of reasons. One motivation was the absence of statutory Afghan security forces when the first international troops entered the country in late 2001. Since the development of the Afghan National Security Forces under the new regime proceeded slowly, the US turned to pre-existing armed groups – including the employment of PSCs and the collaboration with militias – as quick-fix force multipliers.

Additionally, force multipliers enabled the US and its allies to deploy fewer active military service personnel or police officers to Afghanistan. PSCs and the APPF relieved US forces and the ISAF of military support functions and armed guarding for military transport, logistics and bases. Auxiliary police forces were promoted by the US as an expedient stopgap measure since the establishment of the Afghan National Police (ANP) was lagging, expensive and cumbersome.

Another reason for the use of force multipliers in Afghanistan lay in their ability to operate largely outside the scrutiny of the public and parliamentary bodies of the sending states. Force multipliers not only reduced the threat of a public backlash in response to ‘body bags’ returning home to countries such as the US, but also enabled governments to circumvent troop limits approved by parliament as well as public criticism.

Moreover, in the short term, relying on force multipliers was considered more cost effective than increasing the size of the Afghan National Army (ANA) or the ANP (Goodhand/Hakimi 2014: 14). It freed the ANA and ANP of tasks such as static guard duty, allowing military and police planners to use the ANA and ANP for more important tasks, such as offensive counterinsurgency operations. Furthermore, the US military hoped that force multipliers could be either disbanded or integrated into the ANA and ANP once they were no longer needed. As one officer remarked with reference to an auxiliary police force unit: “the ALP [Afghan Local Police] was never designed to be anything other than a short-term fix.”⁴

Other motivations were idiosyncratic to the US counterinsurgency doctrine and experience, including reliance on local defense forces and cooperation with militias in Iraq.

4 Author’s interview with Colonel Ashton Hayes, US Army, Senior Advisor to the Afghan Minister of Interior, CSTC-A, Camp Eggers, Kabul, 21 July 2013.

The counterinsurgency manual issued by the US military in 2006 emphasizes the importance of local allies (US Army and US Marine Corps 2007). According to one US military officer: “a reasonable Afghan solution is far better than a perfect Western solution that they will never implement.”⁵ Iraq played a role as well. As of 2006, the US allied with Sunni tribal militias numbering 100,000 who helped fight Al Qaeda militants. These militias received financial and military support from the US and were credited for reducing violence in Iraq to a level that allowed the withdrawal of the US troops from the country. After becoming ISAF commander in mid-2010, US general David Petraeus drew analogies between Iraqi and Afghan militias.⁶ Even before Petraeus took command in Afghanistan, the US military had pushed for auxiliary police programs – often with little consultation with other US government agencies such as the US Department of State or the US Embassy in Kabul (Lefèvre 2010: 19-20).

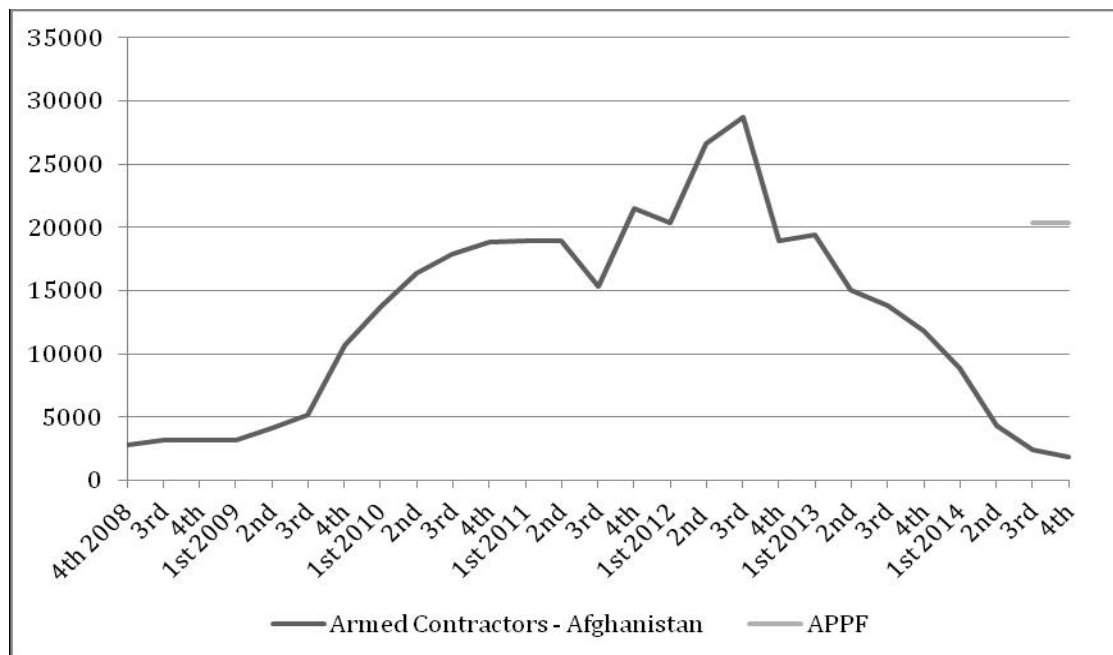
For these reasons, PSCs, the APPE, militias and auxiliary police forces emerged as major players within the Afghan security environment. The following sections discuss the problematic evolution of each of these force multipliers since the beginning of the Afghanistan intervention.

2.1 Private Security Companies

Since the late 1990s, military and security contractors have successfully established themselves as helpmates to governments involved in international interventions and post-conflict states (Krahmann 2010; Stanger 2009; Kinsey 2006; Avant 2005; Singer 2003). In particular, the US government is “relying heavily, apparently for the first time during combat or stability operations, on private firms to supply a wide variety of security services” (Schwartz 2011: 1). The use of contractors has not remained limited to military support services. The employment of armed and unarmed security guards to protect military and civilian bases, logistics convoys, and personnel has become increasingly widespread and accepted within multilateral interventions.

5 Briefing by Major General Richard Formica, Commander Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A), attended by one of the authors, Kabul, 28 September 2009.

6 Briefing attended by one of the authors, ISAF HQ, Kabul, 9 October 2010.

Figure 1: US Department of Defense Security Contractors⁷

In Afghanistan, the proliferation of armed guards has been the most pronounced. Between 2008 and 2012, the number of security guards contracted with the US Department of Defense increased more than tenfold from 2,745 to 28,686 (CENTCOM 2014) [see Figure 1]. About 90 percent of these security guards were armed (Schwartz 2011: 2). They provided four main services: static security, convoy protection, travel security for personnel and 24-hour security for high-ranking officials (Checchia 2011: 2).

While the US may lead in the use of PSCs as force multipliers, a number of other countries have also employed armed security contractors in Afghanistan (Krahmann/Friesendorf 2011; Leander 2013). Canada, for instance, hired four PSCs to secure its ISAF forward operating bases in Kandahar (Moore 2010). The Netherlands employed security contractors to guard the outer circle of military installations in the country (AIV 2007; Finabel 2008: 14). Germany contracted individually 246 Afghan security guards to help safeguard its military bases in Faisabad, Mazar-e Sharif, Kunduz and Taloquan (Krahmann/Friesendorf 2011: 8, 11). France outsourced security and protection services in part for the primarily French 'Camp Warehouse' in Kabul (Leander 2013).

International organizations – including NATO, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) – also used armed PSCs to secure their military and civilian bases (Krahmann/Friesendorf 2011). In Afghanistan, ISAF employed armed security guards to protect supply convoys on the dangerous transport route between Kabul and Kandahar – an

⁷ CENTCOM Quarterly Contractor Census Reports: www.acq.osd.mil/log/PS/CENTCOM_reports.html (10.7.14).

area where contractors would engage regularly in skirmishes with up to 200 insurgents (WikiLeaks 2009-9-1; Filkins 2010). The EU hired routinely private security guards for its offices as well as its civilian and police missions in Afghanistan (Krahmann/Friesendorf 2011). The UN employed the company IDG Security to provide armed guards to protect its personnel and premises in Afghanistan (UN 2012: 12).

The proliferation of private armed security guards in Afghanistan has been a consequence of the international use of PSCs as force multipliers. Prior to the international intervention, PSCs did not exist in the country. International PSCs were first brought to Afghanistan through contracts with the US and other ISAF forces. They went on to account for the majority of the private security industry operating in the country before 2007, with 57 international companies compared to 18 national firms (Sherman/DiDomenico 2009: 4). However, the number of Afghan PSCs expanded rapidly to between 60 and 90 firms. By 2010, nationally owned companies comprised about half of the PSCs operating in the country (CNN 2010).

As PSCs were a new phenomenon and the rebuilding of state institutions was proceeding slowly, companies operating in Afghanistan did not become regulated until 2008. Moreover, international PSCs employed by the US were exempt from local prosecution due to Status of Forces Agreements. As the following analysis will show, the lack of regulation and control was extremely problematic because US security contractors were authorized expressly “to use deadly force when such force reasonably appears necessary to execute their security mission to protect assets/persons, consistent with the terms and conditions contained in their contract or with their job description and terms of employment” (DOD 2006: 34826). These policies placed increasingly security contractors in combat-like situations (UN 2010: 6; Aikins 2012: 6). Between 2009 and 2010, a total of 319 US security contractors were killed in action in Afghanistan, compared with 626 US soldiers (Schwartz 2011: 9). Furthermore, national and international armed security guards became involved in civilian casualties and other forms of human insecurity.

2.2 Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF)

On account of these developments, President Karzai issued Decree 62 in 2010, ordering the dissolution of all armed PSCs in Afghanistan in favor of the APPF (APPF 2012a). The government designed the APPF as a state-owned company so that it could sell protective services to domestic and international customers (APPF 2012b). Between 2012 and 2014, security contractors in Afghanistan were replaced progressively by APPF guards [see Figure 1].

However, a number of exceptions under the prohibition of armed security contractors existed, meaning that PSCs remained a problem. In addition to the provision of security guards for diplomatic missions, PSCs were able to re-register as Risk Management Companies with permission to provide risk advice for private clients as well as offer training and mentoring to the APPF (APPF 2012a). As the establishment of the 25,000 member strong APPF progressed only slowly, the Afghan government approved a “bridging strategy” which allowed armed PSCs to continue operating under some circumstances. In

2014, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported that only five US military forward operating bases were protected by the APPF while 43 bases were still being secured by PSCs (SIGAR 2014: 96).

In March 2014, the Afghan government therefore announced the dissolution of the APPF (Hodge 2014). While the Afghan government has envisaged that the ANP will assume the APPF's role as armed security service provider (SIGAR 2014: 87-88), the termination of the APPF gives cause to speculations about decreased public security and a renewed resurgence of the PSC industry (Janes 2014; Hodge 2014).

2.3 Militias

From the outset of the invasion of Afghanistan, the US military identified Afghan militias as suitable additional force multipliers. Already in toppling the Taliban government and their al Qaeda allies, the US relied on local armed groups, such as the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, to carry out fighting on the ground. US forces supported these fighters on the battlefield by pinpointing Taliban targets and calling in air strikes. As early as 2002, the US began combating insurgents with the help of Afghan militias (Giustozzi 2008: 166).

Concurrently, international actors supported the government of interim president Hamid Karzai in the establishment of centralized security forces. The main pillars of the Afghan National Security Forces became the ANA and the ANP. As part of international efforts to build a centralized Afghan state, the UN promoted the demobilization, disarmament and re-integration (DDR) of former militias. DDR, which ran from 2003-2005, was followed by another program, the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups. Yet only few militiamen joined the newly constituted ANA (Goodhand/Hakimi 2014: 9).

By 2004, it had become evident that the US-led war in Afghanistan had only been a superficial success. The ANP was seen as part of the problem rather than the solution owing to corruption and incompetence (Wilder 2007). Given the growing insurgency and the small international presence in Afghanistan, the US considered it expedient to continue collaborating with Afghan warlords and their militias, even at the expense of undermining DDR. One example was US support for Gul Agha Sherzai, governor of Kandahar province from 2001-2003. Although many local citizens regarded him as predatory, the US military treated him as a vital ally against suspect insurgents and terrorists (Chayes 2006). Another example is Ahmed Wali Karzai, a half-brother of President Hamid Karzai. As a crucial powerbroker in Kandahar province, he received US assistance for setting up a paramilitary anti-Taliban force, the Kandahar Strike Force. This was despite repeated allegations of his involvement in the drug trade (Filkins et al. 2009).

2.4 Auxiliary Police Forces

The first auxiliary police program took the form of the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP). It was launched in late 2006 by the Afghan Ministry of Interior and promoted by the US military with the aim of providing community policing within the districts as well as

participating in operations led by the Afghan National Security Forces. In order to carry out their tasks, the ANAP received training from DynCorp, a PSC paid by the US, including practical training in weapons handling and tactics. However, local strongmen managed to integrate their militias into the ANAP. Amid concerns that the force was undermining the disbanding of illegal armed groups, it was eventually dissolved in 2008 (Lefèvre 2010; Goodhand/Hakimi 2014: 10).

In 2009, the US military led the design, funding and establishment of another auxiliary force, the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) (Lefèvre 2010: 8). Its objective was to empower local citizens to defend their villages and critical infrastructure such as highways and government buildings against insurgents. The US began the program with a pilot project in Wardak province because the Taliban had most of Wardak under their control and the small number of ANA and ANP was insufficient to reclaim the province.⁸ The US planned to expand the AP3 to other provinces in the future.

Members of the AP3 were to be chosen by district leaders while vetting and approval fell to the Afghan Ministry of Interior, which held overall authority for the program. The National Directorate of Security participated in the vetting of auxiliary police, and US soldiers supervised the three-week training program that the ANP offered the AP3. Since other international partners – especially from the European Union – distanced themselves from the program, the US provided funding and equipment bilaterally (Lefèvre 2010: 12).

Other auxiliary forces programs followed the AP3. Here, the US military led a vast array of initiatives, including the Community Defense Initiative, the Local Defense Initiative, the Critical Infrastructure Program, the Community-Based Security Solutions, the Interim Security for Critical Infrastructure, and Village Stability Operations. Differences notwithstanding, all of these programs were supposed to complement efforts by international and Afghan security forces to reduce the control of insurgents over territory and people.

The largest program to date has been the Afghan Local Police (ALP), a force with limited law enforcement competencies that include detaining suspect insurgents and then handing them over to the ANP. The authorized strength of the ALP measures 30,000 personnel;⁹ by 1 December 2014, there were 27,837 ALP personnel, encompassing 150 districts in 29 out of 34 provinces (SIGAR 2015: 98; UNAMA 2014: 40). US Special Forces were vital partners for the ALP. Not only did they provide training to the ALP over a period of a few weeks, the US was also the main funding source for the ALP. The US military paid initially ALP units in

8 US Special Operations Forces (SOF) supported auxiliary police under the US Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command – Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A). A standard definition of SOF does not exist. Most commonly, the terms SOF and special forces refer to elite military units trained for missions such as unconventional warfare, reconnaissance and counter-terrorism. A variety of elite forces have worked with force multipliers in Afghanistan, including US Army Rangers and US Army Green Berets.

9 In comparison, the ANA had an authorized strength of 195,000 and the ANP of 157,000. For financial year 2015, the US Department of Defense requested US\$ 4.11 billion for the main fund used to finance the Afghan National Security Forces. According to NATO, the ALP will cost US\$ 121 million per year to maintain once it reaches its target strength (SIGAR 2014: 67 and 100).

cash until the system was changed and the US funded the ALP by way of the Afghan Ministry of Interior as part of the police *tashkeel* (a staffing and management document). The US military also provided equipment and weapons. By 2014, the US had delivered 23,246 AK-47 rifles, 4,045 PKM machine guns, 2,057 light trucks, 4,950 motorcycles, and 2,686 radios to the ALP (SIGAR 2014: 100).

Some international actors harbored skepticism towards the ALP. The European Union Police Mission, for one, wanted nothing to do with the scheme. However, the US was not alone in working with the ALP. British troops mentored the ALP in Helmand province (Stevens 2013). Indeed, Britain had called for the creation of village defense forces even before the US (Human Rights Watch 2011: 16-17). Germany also cooperated with the ALP on a small scale, although the German Ministry of Defense officially forbade German troops to work with the ALP.¹⁰ On the ground, however, German soldiers were reported to have trained and provided non-lethal equipment to ALP units (Monitor 2013; see also Münch 2013: 38).

In sum, the use of force multipliers has mainly been driven by the interests of the US and other states engaged in Afghanistan. PSCs, the APPF, militias and auxiliary police forces were viewed as quick-fix solutions that enabled the international coalition to minimize its military footprint, cut costs and reduce any potential political fall-out from military casualties. The haphazard and unplanned manner in which the US, in particular, had created, supported and employed force multipliers facilitated the emergence of a security environment in which diverse armed groups compete for power and influence. The next section examines the reasons why force multipliers have become a source of human insecurity in Afghanistan.

3. Pathologies

Several pathologies explain when and why force multipliers may impact negatively on human security. One set of pathologies concerns the parochial interests of these actors, such as their involvement in local power struggles, their own bids for influence, and their connections with other armed groups, including even the Taliban. Another set of pathologies relates to insufficient national and international oversight of PSCs, the APPF, militias and auxiliary forces, including ineffective regulation, problems with recruitment and vetting, weak command and control, and freedom from prosecution. While these pathologies tend to apply to some force multipliers more than others, commonalities also exist.

10 Briefing by German general attended by one of the authors, Berlin, 1 July 2010.

3.1 Involvement in Power Competition

The connections of national PSCs, militias and, to some degree, auxiliary forces to prominent Afghan clans have become a major cause of concern because they have involved force multipliers in local and national power struggles. Rather than acting as the agents of the US, ISAF or the Afghan government, these connections have allowed force multipliers to be instrumentalized by various families, power brokers and tribes in the pursuit of parochial interests. The local population has often been caught in the middle of this power competition.

The first national PSCs, in particular, were established and used to strengthen the power bases of leading Afghan clans (Sherman/DiDomenico 2009: 1) [see Box 1]. Several of these PSCs held contracts with the US military, ISAF and other coalition member states. Watan Risk Management (2014) protected over 400 convoys under a subcontract for ISAF and held additional contracts for the protection of US military forward operating bases. NCL Security performed security services for contractors from the US Department of Defense and was awarded portions of the Host Nation Trucking contract in 2009 (House of Representatives 2010: 13).

US and ISAF security contracts with these PSCs thus contributed to strengthening the political influence of particular families. However, international contracting authorities paid little attention to their involvement in national politics despite ties between some PSCs and clans being well known.

Box 1: PSCs and their Clan Connections

Strategic Security Solutions International (SSSI): Linked to Hasseen Fahim, brother of the former First Vice President Marshal Fahim

Watan Risk Management: Owned by the brothers Ahmad Rateb Popal and Rashed Popal, both cousins of former President Hamid Karzai and the late Ahmad Wali Karzai

Elite: Belong to Sadeq Mojadedi, son of Hazrat Sibghatullah Mojadedi – a former chairman of the Meshrano Jirga – and Mowdud Popal

NCL Holdings with ‘strategic partner’ NCL Security: Founded and chaired by Hamed Wardak, the son of former Defence Minister Rahim Wardak

Asia Security Group (ASG): Founded by Hashmat Karzai, another cousin of the former President, who claims to have sold the company

Logistics Solutions Group (LSG): Said to be linked to the son of an ANA division commander

Shepherd Security: Reportedly headed by a cousin of Zaher Aghbar, former head of the Olympic Committee; Aghbar was responsible for PSC registration in the Ministry of Interior

President Karzai’s prohibition of armed PSCs in 2010 was an attempt to reign in agents that had “become rivals of the government” (Filkins/Shane 2010). According to the Afghanistan Analysts Network, Karzai had repeatedly expressed frustration over the fact that he could not control “who his international partners are employing, arming or empowering (e.g. PSCs)” (Checcia 2011: 3). In the aftermath of the decision, a total of 24 PSCs were declined

government authorization to continue their businesses. Seven PSCs – NCL, SSSI, Watan Risk Management, LSG, Elite, Asia Security and Shepherd – were told to disband due to ties with high-ranking government officials (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2011).

While the remaining PSCs are less conspicuously involved in Afghan power politics, the problem has by no means been resolved. Moreover, militias and auxiliary forces have been accused of similar links to power brokers at the provincial and state levels. The ALP has, in particular, proved to be a convenient medium for shoring up local and national patronage networks. In some cases, loyalty and kickbacks have been exchanged for permission to field an ALP unit.¹¹

3.2 Links with Illegal Armed Groups

Links between force multipliers and illegal armed groups, including the Taliban, have posed an additional problem. These links have played a role in funding and empowering illegal actors who challenge the Afghan state and abuse the population. By the time the US had secured their preliminary victory against the Taliban in early 2002, most Afghan fighters were under the control of various warlords. In the following years, these strongmen continued to wield influence over armed groups, with powerbases on the district, provincial, and/or state levels. As late as 2010, the Afghan Ministry of Interior estimated that there were “no fewer than 2,500 unauthorized armed groups” in government-controlled territories (UN 2010: 9).

Illegal armed groups have taken advantage of the creation of force multipliers to continue operating in new and legal guises. Some groups have registered as PSCs, becoming private companies at the mere stroke of a pen (UN 2010: 9; House of Representatives 2010: 20). Commanders of other informal armed groups have used auxiliary force programs, such as the ANAP, to regularize their men (Wilder 2007: 13-17; Lefèvre 2010: 6-7). In many cases, they control such forces in the same way they controlled their private armies. Moreover, commanders who managed to transform their militias into auxiliary police forces used the units to “harass previous foes and avenge old disputes” (Joint Briefing Paper 2011: 14). Even PSCs or auxiliary police that are not de facto incorporated militias or other armed elements have recruited experienced and armed personnel from both groups (UN 2010: 9).

When illegal armed groups reinvented themselves as PSCs or auxiliary police forces, they tended to pursue their own agendas in local disputes. In the case of the ALP, they were now even able to act in the name of the state.¹² As a group of NGOs noted:

Some communities report that it is local warlords (not ‘communities’) who request the ALP; and that while selection is in some cases done through the shuras [councils, often composed of elders], in many cases the shuras are made up of former mujahedeen commanders who use the program as a means by which to provide their own militias with salaries and a cloak of

11 Author’s telephone interview with human rights researcher, 4 July 2013.

12 Author’s interviews with ISAF and NGO personnel, Camp Marmal, Mazar-e Sharif, 25 July 2013.

legitimacy. In other cases the shura process is circumvented altogether, with selection done by local commanders operating independently of the shura (Joint Briefing Paper 2011: 8).

Furthermore, the Taliban has likewise been able to infiltrate the ranks of force multipliers. One example of Taliban fighters gaining employment with PSCs includes a suicide attack on an anti-narcotics base in Kabul (Tolonews 2014). Even the auxiliary police forces appointed former Taliban; in Badghis province, a Taliban commander along with 20 armed men – who had stoned a woman to death and were implicated in a series of beheadings – switched over to the government side and were incorporated into the ALP (AIHRC 2012: 26-27).

Subcontracting has been another way of cementing links between force multipliers and illegal armed groups. Most of the PSCs employed for convoy security under the US Host Nation Trucking contract, which delivered 70 percent of the US military's supplies in Afghanistan, subcontracted "warlords, strongmen, commanders, and militia leaders who compete with the Afghan government for power and authority" (House of Representatives 2010: 2). These subcontractors have often demanded protection payments from convoys passing through their territories, and they are believed to have, in turn, paid the Taliban for safe passage along vital highway routes (House of Representatives 2010: 34-35). Although several contractors reported extortion, bribes, special security and protection payments, the US Department of Defense did not make any effort to curb such practices (House of Representatives 2010: 4, 55-66).

International PSCs have also relied heavily on subcontractors such as national PSCs, militias and warlords. According to an inquiry by the US Senate Committee on Armed Services, ArmorGroup contracted two local warlords – Nadir Khan (known as 'Mr Pink') and Timor Shah (known as 'Mr White') – to provide security at Shindand Airbase. The two warlords turned out to be in conflict with each other, and Shah assassinated Khan in December 2007. Moreover, Shah and Khan's successors were later identified to be Taliban supporters (MacAskill 2010). Another company, EOD Technology, partnered with local commander Said Abdul Wahb Quattili to protect Army operations and sites in Adraskan despite the fact that his son was suspected of "being an agent to a hostile foreign government" (Senate 2010: v-iv; Aikins 2012: 7).

3.3 Ineffective Regulation of PSCs

The ineffective regulation of PSCs has contributed to the pathologies mentioned here. Although the Afghan government decreed that all national and international businesses had to be registered as early as March 2005 (UN 2010: 16), the need to first establish legal and administrative capabilities meant that "PSC regulation was virtually non-existent until the beginning of 2008" (Aikins 2012: 10). The Afghan Ministry of Interior therefore decided to adopt the Procedure for Regulating Activity of Private Security Companies (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2008). The licensing process progressed only gradually; by 2009, a mere 25 international PSCs had registered with the Afghan Ministry of Interior (UN 2010: 2). At its peak, the database listed a total of 52 licensed PSCs out of 90 companies estimated

to have been operating in Afghanistan (CNN 2010; Bundestag 2010: 4-5; De Nevers 2009: 485).

Enforcement of the procedure has remained another persistent problem. A special committee appointed by President Karzai in 2010 accused 16 PSCs of major offenses, including “the illegal use of weapons, illegal hiring, vehicle offenses and tax evasion” (Rivera/Sahak 2011). Ragin Spanta, the Afghan National Security Advisor, further observed that many companies had not registered their employees or weapons. The committee report concluded that nearly two thirds of national and international PSCs in Afghanistan had disregarded national laws and licensing regulations.

3.4 Failure of the APPF

The APPF was set up to resolve the issue of an uncontrolled private security industry in Afghanistan. However, the APPF’s development dragged on for a long time. The initial plan called for the incorporation of Afghan security guards who had been working for PSCs within the APPF. The guards would “then be sent back to the same places they worked before, and the companies that had formerly paid a private security company for the guards would instead pay the Interior Ministry to cover their salaries, plus a 20 percent fee for overhead and to provide a profit” (Rosenberg/Bowley 2012). However, few PSC employees were willing to transfer to the APPF, while clients remained doubtful of the standards of the new guard force. “Mohammad Hashim Mayar, an adviser to the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, an umbrella group for nongovernmental aid organizations, said he feared that the new force would be poorly trained and end up as little more than a militia for the variety of power brokers who dominate Afghan politics – or the Taliban” (Rosenberg/Bowley 2012).

Left with little choice by the Afghan government, NATO and the US sought to assist in establishing the force by creating the APPF Advisory Group. The purpose of this group was “to advise and help train the guard force” (Rivera 2011). In 2011, the US reallocated US\$ 35-40 million to the APPF from funds designated by Congress for security in Afghanistan after a NATO assessment noted that the force had not met more than two thirds of 166 “essential” criteria, including shortfalls in training, supplies, staff and funding (Rivera 2011).

Owing to delays in the formation of the APPF, the Afghan government issued a ‘bridging strategy’ that postponed the disbanding of the PSC industry until March 2012 (SIGAR 2013: 1). In the meantime, clients were permitted to use PSCs as Risk Management Companies in addition to armed security provided by the APPF (SIGAR 2013: 1). Embassies were allowed to continue employing PSCs for armed protection indefinitely, while ISAF was given an extension to use PSCs until March 2013 (Aikins 2012: 12). In order to enable these exceptions, a number of national and international PSCs received renewable license extensions (Rønnevik 2012: 49). Some reconstruction and development projects kept using unlicensed PSCs for security services as APPF guards were considered both unprepared and lacking in standards (SIGAR 2013: 4-5). Guards were often transferred directly from PSCs to the APPF without further training. Moreover, existing loyalties to

“tribal leaders and provincial council members” persisted within the APPF, as did the possibility of Taliban infiltration (RIAN News Service 2012; Johnson 2014).

In 2013, the APPF was still short of its 25,000 target strength with a mere 14,873 guards (SIGAR 2013: 2). Despite the creation of the APPF, many national and international PSCs have remained operational due to a lack of AFFP officers able to meet the demand for security services. Finally, in March 2014, the Afghan government announced its decision to disband the APPF.

3.5 Problems with Recruitment and Vetting

Problems with recruitment and vetting also resulted in infiltration of auxiliary police forces by illegal armed groups (Human Rights Watch 2011). In the case of the ANAP, local councils (*shuras*) were supposed to take the lead in recruiting members. In practice, however, a combination of elders, local power brokers and jihadi commanders were able to bypass the *shuras*. Many recruits were not from local districts but from outside. Although the ANAP focused on south and southeast Afghanistan, armed groups were randomly declared themselves to be part of the ANAP, even in districts for which ANAP was not planned (Lefèvre 2010: 6, footnote 16).

The US military eventually shut down ANAP amidst negative reports. Most of the weapons, uniforms and equipment provided to the ANAP were allegedly never returned (Lefèvre 2010: 9). Unfortunately, the US military did not take this as a learning experience. Instead, it set up the AP3. As with ANAP, the AP3 guards were to be recruited by local *shuras*; yet in practice, the process was dominated by jihadi commanders. Moreover, vetting by the Ministry of Interior, the National Directorate of Security and US Special Forces lacked thoroughness (Lefèvre 2010: 9).

In fact, the US supported the appointment of Ghulam Muhammad Hotak, a former jihadi and Taliban commander, as the head of the AP3. Once installed, Ghulam Muhammad Hotak integrated around 500 of his armed men into the force. Instead of reporting to the ANP, Ghulam Muhammad said he would report only to the US, due to personal rivalries between him and the provincial chief of police. By setting up the AP3, the US changed the local balance of power in a province resembling a “hornet’s nest of rivalries” (Lefèvre 2010: 11).

Other auxiliary police programs have been similarly marred by problems with recruitment and vetting (Lefèvre 2010: 14-20). In this context, the ALP exhibits the starkest divide between planning and reality. According to the Procedure on the Regulation and Establishment of the Local Police of the Afghan Ministry of Interior, the ALP was placed under the authority of the Afghan Ministry of Interior and, on the provincial and district levels, the authority of provincial and district ANP commanders (AIHRC 2012). Additionally, community leaders, particularly *shuras*, were meant to assume a primary role in selecting ALP personnel as well as intervene in cases of misbehavior.

However, the ALP Procedure was poorly drafted (Human Rights Watch 2011: 56-57; AIHRC 2012: 18), resulting in practices that have often diverged from its original intent. In

many districts, elders do not have any say in the ALP; instead, they were often faced with interference by US Special Forces in the recruitment process. In some cases, this led to the appointment of individuals with a reputation for preying on civilians (AIHRC 2012: 23-24). US Special Forces also rejected some ALP candidates recommended by Afghan district officials (Human Rights Watch 2011: 76). Lastly, brutal local commanders of armed groups were involved in the recruitment process for ALP members and units.

3.6 Weak Command and Control

Another pathology that has affected all three force multipliers to varying degrees is weak command and control by international forces and the Afghan government. In the case of PSCs, the US and ISAF have repeatedly been unaware of the actions of their contractors and unable to control them (Senate 2010). Local militias were a wild card within the strategies of the international forces from the very beginning they were under the control of Afghan strongmen and had no basis in law.

Additionally, national and international supervision of the various auxiliary police forces has been weak. Based in Kabul, the Ministry of Interior has not always been capable of controlling dynamics within districts where local strongmen exert influence. The ANP, responsible for overseeing the ALP, has had difficulties as well, with local ALP commanders often proving too powerful for the ANP to control.¹³ In Herat province, the ALP had twice as many men as the ANP in 2011 (Human Rights Watch 2011: 70). UNAMA (2012: 34) reported that “ALP units routinely operate with limited oversight, management and command from centralized security structures”.

To make matters worse, the ANP and ALP have been at loggerheads in some areas due to local conflicts with a strong ethnic dimension that have been lingering for decades. In Baghlan, US Special Forces set up allegedly the ALP without consulting or involving the ANP or other Afghan authorities (Goodhand/Hakimi 2014: 30; UNAMA 2011: 40; UNAMA 2012b: 46, footnote 118). This move exacerbated inter-ethnic violence as local Tajiks regarded the ALP to be a scheme that empowered Pashtun groups (UNAMA 2011: 41).¹⁴

The presence of US soldiers generally reduced the likelihood of abuses being carried out by their ALP agents; in several cases, the US demobilized auxiliary police who had violated human rights (Stevens 2013: 67; UNAMA 2012b: 49). From 2013, ISAF established an ALP watch list that documented violence committed by the ALP and recommended disbanding specific ALP units (UNAMA 2014b: 55). However, ALP abuses targeting the local

13 Author's interview with UNAMA representatives, Mazar-e Sharif, July 2013.

14 It should be noted that Pashtun ALP often preyed on local Pashtuns as well (Goodhand/Hakimi 2014: 31).

population have been taken less seriously. The US military has tended to ignore reports about ALP brutality, choosing rather to praise their performance.¹⁵

3.7 Freedom from Prosecution

Patronage networks and lack of oversight have resulted in all three force multipliers enjoying effective freedom from prosecution. In 2010, British Major General Nick Carter warned that PSCs were operating in a “culture of impunity” in Afghanistan (Norton-Taylor 2010). In particular, US contractors have been protected from local prosecution by a Status of Forces Agreement. Although this agreement envisages that crimes are to be tried in the US, very few American security guards have been charged in their home country. In one exceptional case, two former guards with the security company Blackwater, Justin Cannon and Chris Drotleff, were indicted after they opened fire on a car following a traffic accident in Kabul. In the process, the guards killed two people and wounded one (US District Court 2010). Some have argued that the guards got off lightly with only one conviction for involuntary manslaughter, being acquitted of all other charges (Vergakis 2011).

National PSCs and militias have also been known to operate with impunity. Connections with government officials along with military power have rendered private armed forces in Afghanistan “virtually exempt from criminal prosecution” (Rønnevik 2012: 54). Sardar Mohammad – the long-time head of Ahmed Wali Karzai’s personal security guard force, who would later assassinate him in his own home – “was treated like family by Mr Karzai” (Sarwary 2011). Afghan officials described him as a criminal who kept a private prison and used dogs to torture people. However, he remained immune to prosecution owing to his links with Karzai. “He was accused of several murders but I could not arrest him,” a police official complained (Sarwary 2011).

Furthermore, ethnic differences have played a role in hindering prosecution. In Kunduz province, where the majority ethnic group is Pashtun, most ALP commanders have been Tajik, Uzbek or Turkmen. Given these power structures, when the ALP violated the human rights of Pashtuns, state authorities such as the ANP and National Directorate of Security were unlikely to intervene. At times, the ANP abrogated responsibility of controlling the ALP by referring locals complaining of ALP misconduct to US forces.

Even the US has been reluctant to prosecute the ALP, whose development it had supported strongly. In 2011, numerous reports about ALP misconduct against civilians emerged from Baghlan province. However, the ANP Criminal Investigation Division was thwarted in its attempt to investigate ALP suspects who had received backing from US Special Forces (UNAMA 2012: 36; Human Rights Watch 2011: 61; for another case see Ceccinel 2013). UNAMA representatives interviewed in 2013 in northern Afghanistan stated that they were unaware of a single case in which ALP members had been prosecuted,

15 See Bakhtar News: Afghan Local Police Prove Essential To The Stability of Kunduz, 8 August 2013.

despite numerous allegations of misconduct.¹⁶ In many cases, international actors like the US and NATO turned a blind eye to human rights abuses, arguing that their own informal investigations provided little tangible evidence (Cavendish 2011).

In sum, this section has identified two interrelated sets of explanations for when and why PSCs, the APPF, militia groups and auxiliary police forces have been a source of human insecurity in Afghanistan. The first explanation relates to the parochial interests of these armed groups that are often distinct from or even contrary to those of the Afghan government. The US is partially responsible for this situation as it has chosen to ignore the fact that its force multipliers pursue independent interests as long as they contribute to counter-insurgency. The second explanation lies in a lack of effective national and international oversight of PSCs, the APPF, militia groups and auxiliary police forces. Since these force multipliers have been viewed as temporary solutions, little effort has been made to develop appropriate institutions for their selection, vetting, management and control. The measures which have been adopted have come late, been incomplete and lacked forceful implementation. The following section illustrates the ways in which force multipliers have been able to impact negatively on the human security of the local population.

4. Consequences for Human Security

The main imperative of human security is the assertion that “security policy and security analysis, if they are to be effective and legitimate, must focus on the individual as the referent and primary beneficiary” (Newman 2010: 78). In particular, the human security perspective highlights two demands: freedom from fear and freedom from want. While these demands are widely accepted within academic and policy making circles, they have so far found little application in debates surrounding the international security assistance strategy in Afghanistan. This section argues that human insecurity has become a major problem in Afghanistan. Following Newman’s (2010: 80) mid-range definition of human insecurity as threats caused by human or social actors within conflict, failed states or repressive government, our analysis focuses on two forms of insecurity. The first is physical insecurity, such as hostilities, harassment, abuse, sexual violence illegal detention, torture and death. The second form refers to conflict-related economic insecurity such as extortion, theft and exploitation.

4.1 Hostilities Affecting Civilians

One consequence of insufficient regulations, training, oversight and equipment for force multipliers – such as the auxiliary police forces and PSCs – has been increased violence against civilians. The ALP has endangered civilians by hiding from Taliban attacks among villagers on account of being only lightly armed and a preferred target of the insurgents.

16 Author’s interview, Mazar-e Sharif, July 2013.

Indeed, the Taliban has attacked the ALP up to ten times more often than other Afghan National Security Force components (SIGAR 2013b: 88; Goodhand/Hakimi 2014: 39). This has made villages with an ALP presence a target of hostilities. In Wardak province, it was noted that first the AP3 and later the ALP “acted as a magnet for insurgent attacks” (Goodhand/Hakimi 2014: 25).

PSCs that have protected military convoys along the main highways in Afghanistan have likewise drawn local civilians into hostilities as they have sought protection or under the belief that the villagers were in fact insurgents. Especially along the highways, villagers have come under attack by PSCs fighting with insurgents. At one point, the Afghan Ministry of Interior decided to ban Watan Risk Management and Compass Security from escorting NATO convoys along the route between Kabul and Kandahar “after a pair of bloody confrontations with Afghan civilians” (Filkins 2010). Within two weeks, however, the ban was lifted again owing to the fact that NATO was unable to protect its supply routes without the two companies.

4.2 Harassment, Sexual Violence, Illegal Detention and Torture

Civilian complaints about PSCs, militias and auxiliary forces have been widespread, highlighting various forms of abuse such as harassment, sexual violence, illegal detention and torture (UN 2010b: 23; Rønnevik 2012: 55). A common practice among PSCs has been the unauthorized stopping of vehicles and the erection of roadblocks in order to harass civilians and collect ‘fees’ (UN 2010b: 22; Schmeidl 2008: 27). The frequency of public harassment by PSCs became “a political issue for Karzai” and was one reason for the government’s attempt to ban armed security contractors (Lawrence 2012).

Another type of abuse has been sexual violence against women, children and men. The UN has received “information about armed groups and tribal militia (*arbakis*), some of whom have been employed in the local police force, sexually assaulting women and girls” (UN 2013: 4). Another form of abuse regards the practice of Afghan ‘dancing boys’ who are often “enticed or abducted when they are still children and held as property by an ‘owner’” (IRIN 2013). The international PSC DynCorp became embroiled in a major controversy when it hired dancing boys, allegedly as a farewell gesture for Afghan police recruits (Cavendish 2011; Boone 2010). Accusations of the abduction and rape of boys have also been levied at militia commander Azizullah, a supplier of protective services to the US forces, as well as members of the ALP (Rønnevik 2012: 55; Cecchinell 2013). Men have been targets of sexual violence during interrogations and in detention centers (UN 2013: 5).

Human rights abuses can take many forms. An internal UN report recorded numerous instances between 2009 and 2010 in which militia commander Azizullah was involved in atrocities against the local population of Bermal district, including the mutilation of corpses, arbitrary detention, illegal house raids and shootings (Cavendish 2011; Rønnevik 2012: 55). Some ALP units have forced local people, including children, to defuse improvised

explosive devices (Cecchinell 2013). As one NGO worker in Northern Afghanistan said, “Everybody is afraid of the ALP.”¹⁷

4.3 Killings

Force multipliers have also posed a direct threat to human life in the form of injury and death due to the uncontrolled use of armed force as well as targeted killings. PSCs hired by the US military reportedly killed and wounded over 30 civilians during firefights in Maywand District between 2006 and 2009 (Schwartz 2010: 19). Additionally, there have been cases – such as that of the Blackwater employees Justin Cannon and Chris Drotleff noted above – in which civilians were killed by trigger-happy security guards (McGreal 2010).

While most casualties caused by security guards have been accidental, there have also been accusations of targeted killings by PSCs. UNAMA was told about one case in which “local private security contractors [were] alleged to have shot seven adult males and injured one child in what appears to have been extrajudicial killings” (UN 2010b: 24). Similarly, a member of the Norwegian forces reported “I often heard the claim that private security companies were involved in all sorts of criminal activities, ranging from extortion and protection rackets to kidnappings and assassinations” (Rønnevik 2012: 54).

Militias have been equally involved in violence and the killing of civilians. Commander Ruhullah, who provided protection for ISAF supply routes, was “known to have dealt brutally with those – civilians or insurgents – who have impeded the flow of his trucks” (Filkins 2010). According to an anonymous Ministry of Interior official, Ruhullah “laid waste to entire villages” (Filkins 2010). Another militia unit in Andar district that collaborated with the international military forces executed three innocent civilians who had been arrested during a ground search operation (UNAMA 2014: 47).

Official figures exist only for civilian casualties caused by the ALP. During the first six months of 2013, UNAMA documented 14 civilian deaths and 32 injuries in 32 separate incidents attributed to ALP (UNAMA 2013: 7). During the course of the year, responsibility was placed on the ALP for a 256 percent increase in civilian casualties compared to 2012 (UNAMA 2014b: 50). For the first six months of 2014, UNAMA (2014: 40) documented 22 civilian deaths and 29 injuries caused by the ALP.

4.4 Extortion and Theft

PSCs, militias and auxiliary police forces have not only threatened people’s physical integrity, but also their economic well-being by means of theft, robbery, extortion and the imposition of illegal taxes on local populations.

17 Author’s interview with NGO worker, Kunduz city, 29 July 2013.

Reports speak of PSCs engaging in extortion, protection rackets, kidnapping, theft and looting (Rønnevik 2012: 54; see also Schmeidl 2008: 29; House of Representatives 2010: 3). Local businesses and the civilian population have been regular targets of economically motivated crime by PSCs (Schmeidl 2008: 25). The collection of fees at roadblocks and from local businesses is not simply evidence of corruption, it has taken on mafia-like proportions (House of Representatives 2010: 20; Schmeidl 2008: 30). Furthermore, local PSCs have been involved in the illegal economy, including drug trafficking, arms trade and prostitution (Rønnevik 2012: 54; Sherman/DiDomenico 2009: 1). The APPF has been similarly accused of participation in fraud, theft and involvement in the drug trade (Rønnevik 2012: 73).

According to UNAMA reports, militias and the ALP have also stolen and extorted money from civilians. In Dasht-e-Archi district in Kunduz province, as an example, militias have looted homes and stolen motorcycles (UNAMA 2014b: 9). In that province as well as in Faryab province, the ALP has confiscated and demanded food, firewood and labor from locals (UNAMA 2014b: 52; UNAMA 2013: 7).

A common practice among militias and auxiliary police forces has been the taxing of local populations (Lefèvre 2010: 18). In Kunduz province, some commanders expanded their power base by fielding both ALP units funded by the Ministry of Interior and by establishing militias living from Islamic taxes (*ushr*) that they levied from villagers. It has often been unclear whether armed men represented the ALP or simply another militia, not least because some militias acquired ALP uniforms and pretended to be ALP.¹⁸ People who refused to pay militias or the auxiliary police forces risked being labeled as insurgent supporters, making themselves viable targets. As one community elder told UNAMA:

There are 46 mosques in Khoja-Kenti area; each week one mosque must supply the ALP and Arbakies with one livestock and 100 pieces of bread. Families have to contribute equally to supply these items to the armed groups; any family that fails to contribute will be in trouble with the ALP commander, most probably the head of family will be accused of supporting the Taliban. (UNAMA 2013: 55).

Inversely, during times when the Taliban exploited the local population, the ALP would sometimes attack people paying these taxes, even if they had no choice.¹⁹

4.5 Economic Exploitation

While members of force multipliers are frequently accused of extortion and crime, one must recognize that they are also victims of poverty. The international coalition forces have exploited local poverty and underdevelopment to obtain cheap security forces. The fact that local Afghan security guards and APPF personnel “are typically paid just a few hundred dollars a month ... is testament to the poverty that racks this country” (Ahmed 2012).

18 Author’s interviews with several NGO staff from Kunduz, Kunduz city, 29 July 2013, and with UNAMA representatives, Mazar-e Sharif, July 2013. See also UNAMA 2012b: 48-49.

19 Author’s interview with UNAMA representatives, Mazar-e Sharif, July 2013.

Moreover, in the case of the APPF, security guards have often failed to be paid their regular salary by the Ministry of Interior.

Furthermore, force multipliers have helped to keep casualties among the international coalition and national Afghan forces at a minimum. As the New York Times notes, private security guards serve “as the first line of defense against bombings and bullets meant for Westerners and high-profile Afghan government officials. In countless cases, such private security guards are the ones killed by thwarted attacks” (Ahmed 2012). The rate of US-employed private security guards killed in Afghanistan has been 2.75 times higher than that of US troops (Schwartz 2011: 9). Contractors engaged in convoy security are even eight times more likely to be killed in action than uniformed personnel (Schwartz 2011: 9). Among the APPF and ALP, casualty figures have been high as well; according to NATO data, a total of 1,028 ALP members, or 4.1 percent of the force, were killed in action between 2013 and 2014 (SIGAR 2014: 101).

Afghan government mismanagement and corruption has exacerbated economic insecurity among the APPF and the ALP. In some instances, international clients had to pay the APPF directly, in addition to the fees that they paid the Afghan government for security services, since the guards never received their salaries and threatened to leave. ALP members would sometimes go without pay due to funds disappearing in Kabul or on the provincial and district levels. In 2014, an ALP unit “cut the power lines from Kabul to eastern Laghman and Nangahar Provinces in retaliation for not being paid for three months” (SIGAR 2014: Introductory statement). Some unpaid ALP units preyed on citizens. In one case from Archi district, the Afghan government failed to pay the ALP for several months after US troops had ceased direct cash payments. In response, the ALP demanded food from villagers in addition to levying Islamic taxes. Several villagers who had refused to pay were killed.²⁰

This section has demonstrated that force multipliers have often taken advantage of the support as well as the lack of oversight by the US and other actors in order to pursue their own interests at the expense of the local population. The disturbing repercussions this has had on human security in Afghanistan have been largely ignored or considered a price that has to be paid in order to subdue the insurgents. This report contends that this is a misconception and that future policies must be directed towards curtailing the role of force multipliers in Afghanistan and in other interventions.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In Afghanistan, force multipliers have been utilized for many reasons such as to compensate for the absence of national security forces, to maintain a small military footprint, to reduce the cost of the intervention, to circumvent parliamentary control, and to enhance local

20 Author’s interview with several NGO staff from Kunduz, Kunduz city, 29 July 2013.

ownership. This report has illustrated that all these reasons have encouraged international actors, particularly the US, to support and make use of PSCs, the APPF, militias and auxiliary police forces as part of their security strategy.

In congruence with largely external reasons for employing local force multipliers, any negative consequences related to their use and activities have primarily been analyzed in terms of state security and their implications for international strategic objectives. The detrimental impact of force multipliers for the security of the local population has either been disregarded or accepted with the argument that the ends – especially the suppression of the insurgency – justify the means.

The present study challenges this perspective. Increasing the human security of the Afghan population and rebuilding a viable long-term security system have been the ultimate objectives of strategic goals such as the fight against the Taliban. PSCs, the APPF, militias and auxiliary police forces have undermined the achievement of these overarching objectives due to problems associated with particular interests, local connections, regulation, recruitment, vetting, command, control and prosecution.

In the pursuit of their parochial interests, in order to strengthen their own power or that of related actors, and because they are not effectively controlled, international force multipliers have become a cause of human insecurity. Accusations levied against PSCs, the APPF, militias, and auxiliary police forces have included the harassment, rape, torture, illegal detention, killing and exploitation of civilians.

The fact that force multipliers have often gone unpunished for their crimes has bred additional resentments among the population. Criminal investigations have not only been hindered on account of local civilians often being unsure of whether the perpetrators are legal or illegal forces, but also because international and local actors have protected members of PSCs, the APPF, militias and auxiliary forces from prosecution.

In conclusion, this report recommends the following:

1. In Afghanistan and other military interventions, international actors should resist the temptation to use armed force multipliers as a quick-fix solution for filling gaps in local and international force structures. Using force multipliers redirects important resources away from the construction of viable public security institutions (RUSI 2009: 102; Jackson 2010: 7). Moreover, it undermines DDR and leads to a proliferation of armed groups that compete with and weaken state security forces. It is optimistic at best and naïve at worst to believe that armed groups, once created, will simply go away. This report has demonstrated that PSCs, militias and auxiliary forces have become entrenched in the system, with an ability to reinvent themselves in the face of attempts to abolish them. Indeed, some of the auxiliary police forces created under international auspices, such as the Critical Infrastructure Program, continued to operate after the Afghan government ordered their disbandment (UNAMA 2012b: 45).
2. International actors should instead focus on helping to create effective and accountable national military and police forces. In Afghanistan, this means strengthening the international support for the ANA and ANP. This is an opportunity for the new NATO-

led Resolute Support Mission, which replaced ISAF in January 2015. The ANA and ANP remain mired in problems (SIGAR 2015b). Improvements in their standards and behavior should, however, be possible by redirecting resources and training from force multipliers to the ANA and ANP. International literacy programs have already improved literacy rates within the ANP in comparison to the ALP (AIHRC 2012: 28). More importantly, many local citizens hold the ANP in higher regard than the ALP and argue that the state should use the ANP instead of the ALP to create security (AIHRC 2012: 37). In 2012, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission wrote: “In almost all interviews done with experts, local government officials in provinces and districts, and local population [sic], the ANP was preferred to the ALP and concerns were raised about the future of the ALP” (AIHRC 2012: 46). Preferences for the ANP stem not least from the fact that the ANP is subject to better command and control. In contrast, this report has shown that the ALP has been a bottom-up initiative with weak centralized control and subject to the vagaries of local power politics.

3. In the light of the analyses stated above, international actors should facilitate DDR and the integration of local force multipliers in Afghanistan. With the abolition of the APPF, this does not mean reverting to the use of PSCs for the protection of the remaining international military and civilian operations, but rather supporting the integration of private security personnel into public armed and police forces. International actors should also refrain from supporting militias and opt to facilitate the merger of the ALP with the ANP. Promoting effective and accountable security sector governance should be a priority of NATO’s Resolute Support Mission and of the international presence in Afghanistan more broadly.

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Acronyms

AIHCR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANAP	Afghan National Auxiliary Police
ANP	Afghan National Police
AP3	Afghan Public Protection Program
APPF	Afghan Public Protection Force
CENTCOM	United States Central Command
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan
DDR	Demobilization, Disarmament and Re-integration
EU	European Union
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PSC	Private Security Company
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
US	United States of America